

**New Challenges, New Elites? Changes in the Recruitment and Career Patterns of
European Representative Elites**

Heinrich Best

Institut für Soziologie
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
Carl-Zeiss-Straße 2
07740 Jena
Germany

Tel.: ++49 (0)3641-945540
Fax: ++49 (0)3641-945542
e-mail: Heinrich.Best@uni-jena.de

Paper presented to the 20th IPSA World Congress, Fukuoka 2006

RC02-2 Changing Composition of European Elites

Fukuoka 9-13 July 2006

Abstract: Long term changes in the recruitment patterns of European representative elites can be described as the aggregate result of selectorates' responses to the sequence of fundamental problems challenging polities since the emergence of modern representative political institutions in the 19th century. Earlier comparative studies (Best and Cotta, 2000) have shown that the challenges of state and nation building, the industrial transformation of European societies and polities, the emergence of mass democracy, and the massive expansion of the welfare state after the Second World War sequentially transformed recruitment and career patterns of European representative elites.

Recent data show that some long-term trends of (Western) European parliamentary recruitment after the Second World War, for example, the increase of MPs with a public sector background have reversed or plateaued since the late 1980s. At the same time a rise in turnover, a decrease of incumbency and a growing diversity of recruitment patterns can be seen in the same group of polities. This paper explores whether and to what extent these changes are linked to changes in the party systems of Western European polities and whether new trends of parliamentary recruitment are emerging. It introduces the proposition that after the 'consensus challenge' of the post Second World War era a 'legitimacy challenge' is now shaping European legislative recruitment, increasing the value of social and cultural assets of candidates that are related to their expert-status and favouring properties signalling their moral integrity.

I. The Competition for Political Leadership

In his famous and still provocative account of the „true nature of democracy“ Joseph Schumpeter defined the democratic method as “that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (1959:259 and 269). Whilst in the classical doctrine of democracy the “selection of the representatives was made secondary to the primary purpose of the democratic arrangement which is to vest the power of deciding political issues in the electorate”, Schumpeter reversed these two elements and made “the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of the men who are to do the deciding” (ibid.). The paper presented here follows this Schumpeterian order of priorities and focuses on the “selection of the representatives”, the men (or women) who are to do the deciding. Hereby we pursue an elitist approach to representative democracy which maintains that it matters who decides and governs. The relevance of representatives’ selection and recruitment is twofold: At an individual level their social and political backgrounds and career-trajectories have supposedly an impact on their attitudes, qualifications and habits; at a systemic level the ways in which political elites’ structures adapt to the challenges posed by social, economic and political change are theoretically constitutive for political systems’ performance, legitimacy and stability (Best and Cotta 2000a:16-18).

Research presented in this paper follows the systemic track of research by providing a structural history of European representative elites in a comparative perspective. The approach of our study is devoted to Stein Rokkan’s tradition of historical-comparative micro-analyses of European political development, based on aggregate data (Rokkan 1999). As a result of a collaboration that has extended now over twenty years a comprehensive database on European representative elites has been built up covering the period from the mid

nineteenth century to the present (Best and Edinger 2005). The purpose of this project was and still is to complete and complement the set of time-series available for a comparative macro-history of European polities, which previously has been focused on electoral data and data on welfare state development, by an evolutionary study of the personnel emerging from the “free competition for a free vote” (Schumpeter 1959:271). Processes of European state and nation-building and, foremost, of democratic development and the emergence of party systems can now be analysed at the level of the leading personnel involved.

Here graph: 1

The subject of our research is national “representative elites” (Norton 1993:43), i.e. the members of national state parliaments (only second chambers) and constituent assemblies. In an earlier publication we have justified this choice by the status of representative elites of being the “crucial link in the exchange process between society and polity typical of contemporary democracy”, and “the primary channel through which society, with its variety of conflicting values needs, interests, identities, resources, demands, makes itself felt in the institutional arena of democracy” (Best and Cotta 2000:7). Our research has strongly confirmed this view and identified parliaments as intersections of different segments of the elite system, a *mixtum compositum* of representatives of different societal interests and from various political followings. It also became clear, however, that any assumption that representative assemblies may socially “mirror“ the societies from whence they are recruited are normative constructs and never found in a polity where there is a “free competition for a free vote” (Schumpeter 1959:271). The parliaments which came closest to the ‘mirroring’ ideal were characteristically those of Eastern European People’s Democracies where the cadres’ offices of Communist Parties controlled admission to the assemblies according to carefully designed quota systems based on criteria such as gender, social origin and ethnic

background. But even under these conditions the mirrors were distorted in favour of meritorious party activists and veterans (Mersch 1965). The paradox that representative democracy emerges as an order of inequality from processes of selection and election which are, in principle, egalitarian, inclusive and free was our starting point and defines the subject of our work.

II. Actors and Assets in the Process of Recruiting Representatives

In this paper we intend to reconstruct the rules of the democratic game at a crucial point of its course, i.e. when it comes to the decision of who has the right of representation. We assume that these rules are inherent to the “competition for political leadership”, which was called ‘free’ by Schumpeter “in the same sense in which everyone is free to start another textile mill”, meaning everyone can be considered free to enter the competition (1959:295). We believe the changing nature of this competition to be the driving force behind the long-term transformation of recruitment patterns of representative elites. In our earlier study we have proposed the application of a supply and demand model to conceptualize the dynamics and constraints of the recruitment process, and in particular to gain a better understanding of why long-term changes of recruitment-patterns of European representative elites seem to follow regular trends, notwithstanding some erratic fluctuations at historical turning-points and *caesurae* of recent European history (Best and Cotta 2000a:9-16).

In the simplest version of the recruitment function there is a demand and a supply side and sets of formal rules and/or informal practices which determine how the supply and demand sides are matched. The latter includes criteria to determine who participates in which role in the competition for parliamentary mandates and what rewards or risks contenders may expect in the competition. The main actors representing the supply or demand sides of the

recruitment process are *contenders*, *selectorates* and *electorates*. *Contenders* are those actors “who are stimulated to enter the competition for offices by individual incentives like prestige, power, material rewards, spiritual or ideological commitments” (Best and Cotta 2000a:11). They dispose of certain resources which qualify them for entry into the electoral competition and determine their starting position in the race for mandates and offices. Attributes and affiliations of contenders give a favourable or unfavourable momentum to their passage through the recruitment process. *Selectorates* are collective actors who select candidates according “to complex choices considering the probable value of the contenders’ resources for electoral success”, to their ideological fit with, their instrumental function for, and their loyalty to the selectorates (ibid.). In a distant past selectorates were informal caucuses made up of dignitaries and/or state officials involved in the selection of candidates and their presentation to constituencies. Today they are universally institutionalised in the shape of party organisations and have an intermediate position in the recruitment market, by matching the offer of contenders with the perceived preferences of electorates. *Electorates* are the “end consumers of offers on the electoral support markets” and the final judges of the outcomes of legislative recruitment (Best and Cotta 2000a:12). Their perceived preferences for a certain type of parliamentary representation are one factor shaping the lists of candidates drawn up by selectorates. The given makeup of a parliament can therefore be regarded as the final balance of advantageous and disadvantageous factors working in the (self-) selective process preceding the act of recruitment (ibid.).

Here graph 2

The interactions of the actors involved in the recruitment process are partly concealed by the secrecy of the ballot box or the seclusion of the back-rooms where the caucuses and party dignitaries meet. However, much of the process of parliamentary recruitment is open to public

scrutiny and media attention. The latter directs, adjusts and intensifies the public's perceptions and expectations concerning the qualities and qualifications of contenders (Hetherington 2001). Legislative recruitment should therefore be considered as being part of a construction of reality by which groups of selectorates, today mostly within parties, try to influence the competition for power in their own favour. Their lists of candidates are an important element of the facade parties present to the voters and may be indicative to their 'closeness' to certain quarters of the electorate. The makeup of a party's parliamentary representation is therefore a potential attractor of votes and a 'tracer' for the groups it targets in the electorate.

As far as properties and qualities of contenders may serve as attractors in electoral campaigns they are assets in the competition for mandates. Selectorates will prefer contenders who dispose of such valuable characteristics, because they provide an advantage in the struggle for power. Symbolic representation, i.e. the choice of representatives according to what image they transmit to the public in general and to their constituents in particular, is based on inborn or primordial qualities of contenders that relate to some fundamental political issue. Examples are skin colour, gender, religion (as far as it is inherited) or social origin (like working-class background). From symbolic representation which is based on inborn or inherited qualities of contenders we have to distinguish a second type of representation which is bolstered by acquired attributes that are also attractive to voters, but based on the representatives' personal reputations. In this category we find 'heroes', 'martyrs', or well tried leaders. We call this type of representation "deferential" because it is based on voters' deference to achievements of those who are supposed to represent them. Seen from the standpoint of selectorates, in particular from that of parties, both types of representation, symbolic and deferential, have an external focus. The main concern of selectorates here is how their offer of representatives affects their parties' images amongst voters.

However, selectorates also choose candidates for parliamentary mandates according to their internal needs, i.e. the functional requirements of party organisations and parliamentary parties that need experts for certain policy issues, intermediaries which connect them to powerful pressure groups or integrators who are capable of binding together diverging segments of party organisations or levels of the political system. Again we can distinguish between assets of contenders that are ascribed by the positions they hold in formal organisations and internal networks from those qualifications and competences which are achieved through education and experience. The first type of representation we call relational, because it is based on representatives' relations to the extra parliamentary sphere which they have built up thanks to the linkage positions held in organisations and networks. The second type of assets with an internal significance to party apparatuses refers to acquired competences and qualifications of contenders which are instrumental for the exertion of the representational role. *Inter alia* the level of education, subjects studied, pre-parliamentary professional skills and previous political experience are to be listed here.

The “internal”/“external” dichotomy of our taxonomy refers to the demand side of the recruitment function by specifying the double task of selectorates: to stock parliamentary parties with a personnel able (I) to attract voters by representing their dispersed interests convincingly and (II) to fulfil the function of MPs competently by providing effective leadership and good governance. These are competing and sometimes conflictual demands which have been grasped in the *trustee* and *delegate* conception of representations, whereby the delegate is a derivative of constituents' preferences and the trustee is tied up in the institutional constraints of the policy making process (Eulau et al. 1959; Mansbridge 2003). It is obvious that, although these are different conceptions of representation, they are both present in the institutional fabric and political practice of representative democracies and have to be accommodated *within* the collective and individual actors involved. The emphasis of

both conceptions of representation shifts, however, between periods of time and is differentiated between polities. For example, it is plausible to assume that the extension of suffrage and eligibility in the process of mass-democratisation was accompanied by a shift from an internal to an external focus of parliamentary recruitment and towards a “descriptive representation” which allows the represented to recognize themselves in those who represent them (Pitkin 1967).

The ascribed/acquired dichotomy refers to the offer-side of the recruitment function. It considers the fact that representatives owe their mandates not only to their personal virtues, qualifications, and skills but also to the support of powerful organisations or factions of the selectorate which support them with patronage and sponsorship and which expect loyalty and services in return. In theory the offer of contenders in mass-democracies equals the size of the constituency; *de facto*, however, is the pool of contenders dramatically reduced by informal requirements for those who enter the competition. The “free competition for a free vote” is limited by a process which is commonly and somewhat euphemistically called “political professionalisation”, i.e. a configuration of social processes and informal structures that, besides constitutional and legal norms and rules, restrict access to parliamentary mandates and political offices (Best 2003:370). Political professionalisation “defines the rules and rites of access of the group, what holds the members of the group together, and what sets them apart from other individuals in larger society” (Beaver and Rosen 1978:66-67). In short: political professionalisation establishes an insider/outsider differential and provides the social mechanisms that integrate the collective of professional politicians, the “Political Class” (Borchert and Zeiss 2003). The mechanisms of candidate selection which have developed over the past 150 years are now predominantly controlled by party organisations, converting parliaments into a *quasi* internal labour market of parties. If the access to and support of

organisational power has become a crucial advantage in the competition for mandates one could expect an increasing emphasis on relational assets in the recruitment process.

It seems that there is an inherent contradiction in the recruitment function: On the one hand the persuasive mass-factor of democratisation promises an “opening of political societies” and an “expansion of choice opportunities” (Blondel 1997:96). In the long run it fosters a rise in self-expressive values that shift cultural norms toward greater emphasis on responsive and inclusive elites (Welzel 2002). On the other hand restrict the self-interests of established elites and the functional requirements of highly complex policy-making processes the chances of potential contenders and the responsiveness of those who are in office. In fact, Max Weber has already pointed to the fact that political professionalisation is positively correlated with incumbency, and Robert Michels has based his work on the trade-off between political democratisation and the accompanying emergence of oligarchies in mass organisations (1947; 1915). The gap between the practices of parliamentary representation and the promises of mass democracy seems to be widening with a negative impact on the legitimacy of representative democracy and the reputation of those who represent it.

Our previous research has analysed the contradictory co-evolution of mass-democracy and political professionalisation in a series of country-specific studies. This initial approach was justified because the main agent and the decisive context of political development is the nation state within whose perimeters the creation and redistribution of wealth, the acquisition and attribution of power, the definition and assertion of collective identities, the institutionalisation of norms in legal systems, the formation of large bureaucratic structures, the aggregation of interests, and the emergence of platforms for collective political action (e.g. parties) are all performed (Rokkan 1999). If political development is path-dependent, it has been the nation state which paved and maintained the way. This is a claim which can be

extended to legislative recruitment and its outcomes, since the formal structure of opportunities for access to offices, such as electoral laws and eligibility rules, the supply of and demand for contenders, the composition and the mode of operation of selectorates (such as caucuses or parties) were all defined by the national boundaries of polities and societies, although the actual act of recruitment might have taken place on a local or regional level. No wonder, therefore, that political elites have been expected to represent the national distinctiveness of polities and societies (Mosca 1939).

At the end of the 20th century the concept of globalisation has led to the claim that national boundaries are losing their significance and that the (relative) integrity and self-sufficiency of national states and societies, as well as their capacity to set and apply the rules of the game, is fading (Inkeles 1981; Albrow 1998). If the process of *modernisation* has followed distinctive national paths, *globalisation* has changed this situation and subject's societies and polities to the growing impact of trans-national interdependencies. Empirically we should be able to recognize the effects of globalisation by a decreasing degree of national distinctiveness and an increasing amount of trans-national exchange. Since in the sphere of politics, participation – including the competition for offices – is tied to citizenship, and since citizenship is still mainly granted to nationals, our study can only address the quest for distinctiveness. The current territorial range of our data-base – twelve countries which are, with the exception of Norway, all member states of the European Union – must necessarily restrict the scope of our findings. However, this limitation also has advantages, since a decrease in distinctiveness should be seen most clearly in a cluster of countries which are already unified economically, and which share common values and some institutions (Andersen and Eliassen 1993; Hansen 2000).

III. Long Term Trends in the Transformation of European Representative Elites

The methodological approach pursued in our research is the long-term study of parliamentary recruitment and legislative careers. Our principal aim is to identify the factors underlying long-term changes in parliamentary recruitment and career-patterns. Specifically we intend to assess the relative weight of factors such as institutional change, social-structural change and value change which has been identified in our earlier studies as the main driving forces behind the transformation of representative elites in European polities. Originally we departed from the heuristic assumption that the driving forces of elite change merged into one harmonious momentum for “political development” or “political modernisation” (Best and Cotta 2000a). However, our previous studies have strongly confirmed our initial scepticism towards the idea that there is an invisible hand working towards an ontological unity and harmonious interplay of the elements of representative democracy.

In an overview of the long-term trends of European parliamentary representation, those deviating from expected trends following the assumptions of modernisation theory can be easily seen (Cotta and Best 2000). In some areas, recruitment patterns resisted the pressure of general social change for decades, in other areas they followed a cyclical course or diverged, whilst there was no diffusion of modernity. Britain and France, in particular, the two ‘model polities’ for parliamentary democracy in Europe, maintained distinctly traditional features in their parliamentary recruitment patterns over extended periods (Best and Gaxie 2000; Cromwell and Rush 2000). On the other hand, the Weimar Republic displayed the most ‘modern’ parliamentary representation of the time, dominated by political professionals and closely tied to powerful party organisations (Best, Hausmann and Schmitt 2000). However, if this was modernity, it was by no means a contribution to the stability of German democracy ushering, in as it did, the breakdown of parliamentary democracy in 1933. Seen in

comparison, legislative recruitment is a rather conservative element of the power structure and one might speculate whether this structural conservatism is directly (and positively!) linked to the performance of parliamentary democracies.

Here graphs

Although it is not appropriate to describe the long-term change of European legislative recruitment patterns as one coherent, homogeneous, synchronic and progressive process of 'modernisation', we have seen some unidirectional developmental patterns. However, unidirectionality does not exclude distinctiveness. Developments followed paths directed both by democratisation, i.e. the extension of the social niches from whence the electors and the elected were drawn, and by professionalisation, i.e. the establishment of a fairly autonomous field of political action with specific (although mostly informal) rules for access and reward. As mentioned earlier, the two trends are contradictory, since democratisation is socially inclusive, while professionalisation is exclusive, in that it creates a division between spheres of insiders and outsiders. Thus, long term-term trends of European parliamentary recruitment did not result in a harmonious community between electors and elected but in the inherently conflictual (although in most cases peaceful) coexistence between professional politicians (like MPs), who are living from and for politics, and amateur politicians (to use Max Weber's term), i.e. the rest of us who are only incidentally involved in politics (Weber 1947). Much of today's criticism of politicians because of their alleged distance towards the electorate and ruthless pursuit of self-interest is based on the contradictory logic of the processes of professionalisation and democratisation (Best 2003).

Even if we apply the most general notion of the concept of political modernisation we see at least a contradictory picture: Whilst European parliaments have long ceased to be exclusive clubs for the wealthy and high born, and whilst women increasingly find their ways into national assembly halls, we have seen other barriers rise to replace those of class and gender. These new barriers and filters are no longer translating the status hierarchies and value systems prevalent in societies at large into modes of recruitment, but are now located within the narrower realm of political systems (Cotta and Best 2000). The gradual exclusion from the ranks of MPs of those who have a background in productive or distributive economic activities (like entrepreneurs, managers, workers, and agriculturists), the corresponding increase of public servants and (for some time) of officials of pressure group organisations and parties, the growing accumulation (sequential and simultaneous) of local and regional offices, and the increasing embedding of contenders into the higher ranks of party hierarchies all point into this direction. The abolition of formal barriers of access to European parliaments was thus complemented by the establishment of an informal insider-outsider differential, firmly guarded and perpetuated by selectorates and party organisations. Today, those who are available (in terms of their time budget and the security of their jobs) for elective public offices, who have qualifications and skills deemed useful for a political career (preferably certificated by an academic degree of some kind) and who are willing and able to implant themselves in local or party offices, stand a greater chance to penetrate the filters and overcome the barriers on their way to a parliamentary seat.

The re-rise of the public service (after its early heydays in the 19th century and its decline between the two World Wars) as the preferred supplier of parliamentary representatives in Europe can be associated with the emergence of the cartel party which relies “increasingly for [its] resources on the subventions and other benefits and privileges afforded by the state”. With the goals of politics becoming more self-referential and politics becoming a profession

in its own right (Katz and Mair 1995:20-21), representatives with a background in the public service incarnate the fusion between party and state: whilst their stately employer sponsored them when they were amateur or semi-amateur politicians through generous exemptions, it also offers a safe haven when their political career gets into trouble. On the other hand, their background and actual interest disposes them to act as “agents of the state” in their representational role (ibid.: 18). Contenders from other professional backgrounds do not enjoy the same privileges and have to face a disproportionately unfavourable risk-benefit relationship when they pursue their political careers. Full-time party functionaries who might offer an alternative to public servants with regard to the compatibility between public office and ‘private’ occupation are a costly option for their employers and are probably harder to ‘sell’ to the voters as suitable representatives than state officials who can still capitalize on the (somewhat faded) aura of impartiality and competence attributed to the public service.

However, the rise of the public service to become the main societal sector for parliamentary recruitment not only reflects the cost-benefit calculations of selectorates and contenders but can also be linked to the main challenge Western European polities faced in the bipolar world after World War II: namely, the establishment of consensually unified polities and societies as a primary condition for the containment of communism. The mediation of conflicts and the integration of societies was the order of the day, and corporate interest mediation and particularly the extension of welfare state benefits were the most important consensus creating policies. The ‘consensus challenge’ found a response in parliamentary recruitment whereby redistribution specialists, who are predominantly found in the public sector, have prevailed during this period (Best 2003).

Here graph 3

We propose to extend the challenge-response model to become a general explanatory scheme for the long term transformation of European legislative recruitment (ibid; Toynbee 1934-1961). Rather than a linear development, following the general transformation of social structure, we see a pattern of change in parliamentary leadership groups that reflects the sequence of main challenges for polities and societies since (Western) Europe entered the era of democratisation and industrialisation. Thus, the first period of public service dominance in many national parliaments during the 19th century coincides with the era of state and nation-building. During this period, “symbol specialists” (Lasswell) and specialists in the application of executive power, both of whom were to be found in the higher ranks of the public sector, had a dominant role. The second challenge had to be taken up in the period of accelerated economic change when most European societies faced the full impact of industrialisation. In this period specialists in the creation and appropriation of wealth, such as entrepreneurs and landowners, prevailed in parliament. The third challenge was the development of mass democracy and the accumulation of organisational power outside the state apparatus (like political parties and pressure groups). This period saw the rise of specialists in mass mobilisation and the running of intermediary organisations. Again we can establish a link here to Katz and Mair’s (1995) typology of parties, with the ‘Elite party’ providing a political arena for high ranking state officials and the economic elites (like entrepreneurs and large landowners), with the ‘Mass party’ providing career opportunities for party and pressure group officials of the Michelsian type, and with the Catch-all party forming the seedbed for the ‘redistribution specialist’ from public service stock, who finally takes over in the ‘Cartel party’. The (limited) indications for a convergence of legislative recruitment and career patterns across (Western) Europe after the Second World War can therefore be attributed to a growing synchronisation of developments in party systems and of the main policy alternatives faced by European polities, while the impacts of changes in the formal structures of

opportunities (like electoral laws and eligibility rules) or societal change at large have lost momentum.

IV. The end of the consensus challenge and the emergence of the legitimacy challenge

The single most important factor that had synchronized the developments of post-WWII Western European democracies, the communist challenge, disappeared rapidly between 1989 and 1990. The emergence of New Democracies in Central Eastern Europe, with contenders and selectorates for the recruitment of political elites differing dramatically from those in “Old” Europe, inevitably increased the overall variability of elite-structures in Europe, thereby raising crucial questions about the courses of political development after a re-implementation of the “democratic method”. Our paper, however, does not extend the area of observation to Central and Eastern European polities and remains focused on developments in the set of democracies that had been previously included in the long term analysis of legislative recruitment. Only Germany was directly affected by the fall of communism which resulted in the incorporation of the post-communist GDR in the West German polity. It was to be expected that, according to the law of challenge and response, the disappearance of the communist threat would result in a change of legislative recruitment and career patterns. In particular, this change should have affected legislative recruitment from the public sector, which was the pivotal consensus-fostering element in the representative elites of Western Europe after WWII.

Our data confirm this expectation. The time series for public sector representation in Western Europe parliaments reached its turning point at the end of the Cold War and has decreased considerably since. This development was particularly distinct in polities like Germany where the share of the public service had been particularly high compared to other Western

European countries. Public sector representation among MPs in the Bundestag has continuously declined by 24 percent or 12 percentage points, from 51% to 39%, between 1990 and 2005. The levelling of extremes has reduced differences between Western European polities which are confirmed by the observation that after the turn of the 20th century the Standard Deviation of public sector representation reached its lowest level since the 1860s. The turning of the tide is even more pronounced in the case of the teaching profession, which is the single most important subcategory among MPs from the public sector. Since the beginning of the 1990s the average share of members of the teaching profession in the parliaments of Western Europe has dropped by more than 20% from its peak at the beginning of the 1990s, meaning that they have lost about half of their previous gains since the beginning of the 1970s. This process was also accompanied by a levelling down of differences in teachers' legislative recruitment between Western European polities. Although the dominance of MPs with a professional background in the public service has not yet been contested by any other professional category, a pluralisation of recruitment-channels can already be seen. Assets like certified loyalty towards the established political order, distance to the battle-fields of class struggle, and command of the policies of redistribution, which can all be ascribed to contenders from the public service, are less valued after the consensus challenge has passed. On the other hand public servants are implausible champions of neo-liberal policies and budget austerity.

The turn of trends in legislative recruitment patterns was accompanied by a sharp increase in the turnover of individual MP's whereby the average turnover-rates of Western European parliaments nearly doubled between the end of the 1980s and the mid 1990s. The time-series for newcomers forms a distinct peak during these years that is only exceeded during the periods of crisis-recruitment after WWI and II. Although turnover rates have levelled off since the mid 1990s they are still above the average levels of the post-WWII era. From the

late 1990s incumbency (measured by the mean number of elections) is at its lowest level since the mid 1950s and has not yet recovered. Standard Deviations for both indicators remain at relatively low levels indicating that the increases of turnover and the decreases of incumbency were synchronous in Western European polities. We consider these developments as signs of a disturbance in the pre-1990 regime of legislative recruitment that affected the established patterns of reproduction of Western European representative elites. It is not a mere coincidence that these changes occurred during and after the period of regime transition in Eastern Europe: The fall of communism there marked the end of the consensus challenge here.

We interpret recent developments, such as the increasing pluralisation of recruitment patterns or the decrease in incumbency, as responses to a “Legitimacy Challenge” that has emerged *within* the political systems of Western democracies but without confronting them from the social or economic systems like all the earlier challenges in their history. We relate this argument to Toynbee’s (1934) theorem that in facing external challenges, collective actors are producing internal challenges that surface after the same actors have prevailed over their initial challengers. The new challenge targets elite quality, i.e. the ability of a representative democracy to produce efficient and accountable political elites. Institutional settings for elite recruitment, like the Cartel Party, which are based on arrangements between politicians to appropriate and share the resources of the state, might be suitable to meet a consensus challenge and to create a consensual political elite that is united by common material interest. In the long run, however, it undermines the legitimacy of representative democracy because the ingroup/outgroup differential becomes too large and is not justifiable by the achievements of the incumbents. The “true nature of democracy” (Schumpeter) is blurred if the competitive struggle for power is impeded. Due to the logics of its internal working, which is based on a balancing of interests, patronage, loyalty and discretion, the consensus model favours the

trustee over the delegate conception of representation and accentuates symbolic and relational assets for legislative recruitment over differential and relational ones. Although it would be inappropriate to describe parliaments under the reign of the consensus model as assemblies of string-pullers and token representatives some elements of reality can be seen in this unpleasant scenario. The emergence of the legitimacy challenge indicates that there may be more consensus in a consensual political elite than a consolidated democracy can endure. The closure of the political market by political professionalisation and the pooling of interests between formally competing parties is an autocatalytic process that may jeopardize the working of democracy. In this respect, the emergence of the legitimacy challenge is a promising indication that democracy disposes of countervailing mechanisms that can infuse new competition into the system and make the political profession riskier than most of its protagonists would like it to be.

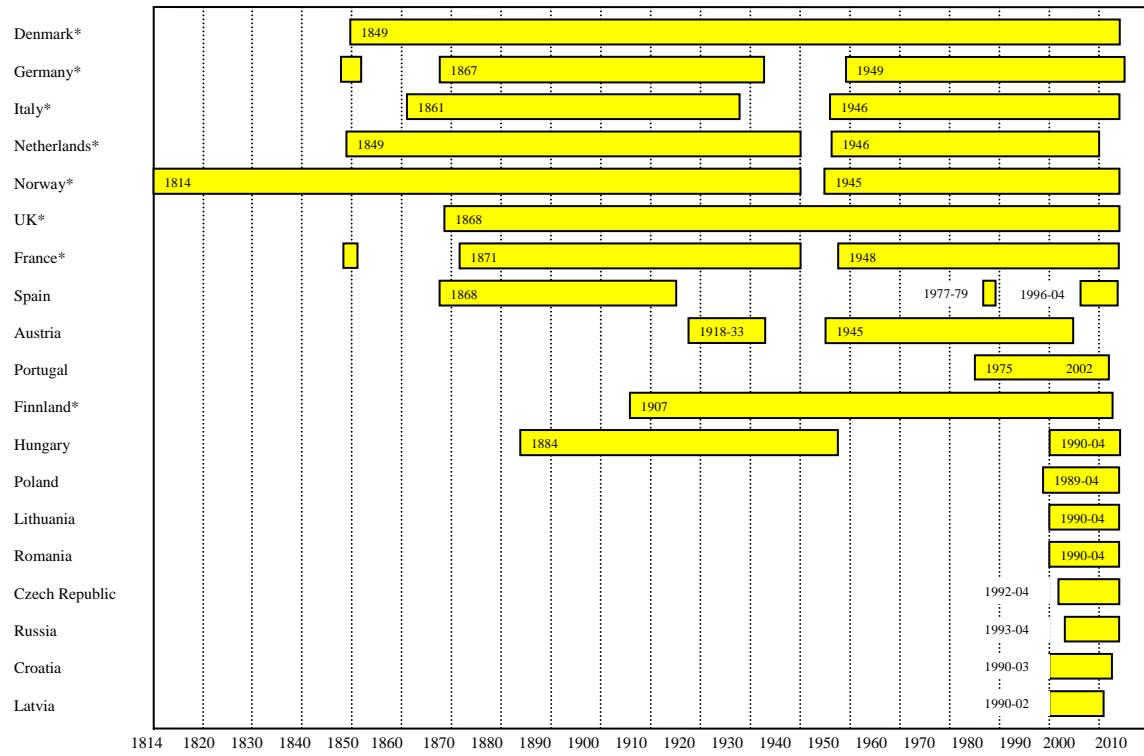
References

- Albrow, M. (1998), *The Global Age. State and Society Beyond Modernity*, Cambridge.
- Andersen, S.S. and Eliassen K.A. (eds.) (1993), *Making Policy in Europe. The Europeification of National Policy-making*, London et al.
- Beaver, D. and Rosen, R. (1978), Studies in Scientific Collaboration Part I: The Professional Origins of Scientific Co-Authorship, in: *Scientometrics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 65-84.
- Best, Heinrich (2003), 'Der langfristige Wandel politischer Eliten in Europa 1867-2000: Auf dem Weg der Konvergenz?', in: S. Hradil and P. Imbusch (eds.), *Oberschichten – Eliten – Herrschende Klassen*, Opladen, pp. 369-400.
- Best, Heinrich and Cotta, Maurizio (2000a), 'Elite Transformation and Modes of Representation since the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Some Theoretical Considerations', in: H. Best and M. Cotta (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000. Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-28.
- Best, Heinrich and Edinger, Michael (2005), 'Converging Representative Elites in Europe? An Introduction to the EurElite Project', in: *Czech Sociological Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 499-509.
- Best, H. and Gaxie, D. (2000), 'Detours to Modernity: Long-Term Trends of Parliamentary Recruitment in Republican France 1848-1999', in H. Best and M. Cotta (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000*, Oxford, pp. 88-137.
- Best, H., Cotta, M. and Verzichelli, L. (2006), The Circulation and Reproduction of European Political Elites: The 'Quest for Convergence', in J. From and N. Sitter (eds.), *Europe's Nascent State. Public Policy in the European Union*, Oslo: Gyldendal, pp. 81-113.
- Best, H., Hausmann, Ch. and Schmitt, K (2000), 'Challenges, Failures, and Final Success: The Winding Path of Structurally Integrated Elite 1848-1999', in H. Best and M. Cotta (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000*. Oxford, pp. 138-195.
- Blondel, J. (1997), 'Political Progress. Reality or Illusion?' in A. Burgen, P. McLaughlin and J. Mittelstraß (eds.), *The Idea of Progress*, Berlin and New York:
- Borchert, J. and Zeiss, J. (eds.) (2003), *The Political Class in Advanced Societies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cotta, M. and Best, H. (2000), 'Between Professionalization and Democratization: A Synoptic View on the Making of the European Representative', in H. Best and M. Cotta (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000*. Oxford, pp. 493-526.

- Cromwell, V. and Rush, M. (2000), 'Continuity and Change: Legislative Recruitment in the United Kingdom 1868-1999', in H. Best and M. Cotta (eds.), *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848-2000*. Oxford, pp. 463-492.
- Eulau, Heinz et al. (1959), 'The Role of the Representative: Some Empirical Observations on the Theory of Edmund Burke' in: *The American Political Science Review*, 53, 742-756.
- Hetherington, Marc J. (2001), 'Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization', in: *American Political Science Review* 95, 619-631.
- Hansen, P. (2000), 'European Citizenship' or 'Where Neoliberalism meets Ethnoculturalism; Analyzing the European Unions Citizenship Discourse', in: *European Societies* 2, pp. 139-165.
- Inkeles, A. (1981), 'Convergence and Divergence in Industrial Societies', in: M. O. Attir, B. Holzner and Z. Suda, *Modernization Theory. Research and Realities*, Boulder (Col.), p. 3-38.
- Katz, R.S. and Mair, P. (1995), 'Change Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party' in *Party Politics* 1, pp. 5-28.
- Mansbridge, Jane (2003), 'Rethinking Representation' in: *American Political Science Review* 97, 4, pp. 515-528.
- Mersch, Wolf (1965), 'Volksvertreter in West und Ost/Das Sozialprofil von Bundestagsabgeordneten und Delegierten der Volkskammer', in: Ralf Dahrendorf (ed.), *Beiträge zur Analyse der deutschen Oberschicht*, München: Piper:30-54.
- Michels, Robert (1915, orig. 1911), *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, New York:
- Mosca, Gaetano (1939, orig. 1911), (*The Ruling Class*, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Norton, Philip (1993), *Does Parliament Matter?*, New York:
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1959, orig. 1942), *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Pitkin, Hanna F. (1967), *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California.
- Rokkan, Stein (1999), *State Formation Nation-Building and Mass Politics in Europe. The Theory by Stein Rokkan* (ed. By P-Flora with St. Kuhnle and D. Urwin), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Toynbee, Arnold (1934-1961), *A Study of History*, Vol. 1-12, London:
- Weber, Max (1947, orig. 1919), 'Politics as a Vocation', in: H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, London.

Welzel, Christian (2002), 'Effective democracy, mass culture and the quality of elites: the human development perspective in: *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 43, 3, pp. 317-340.

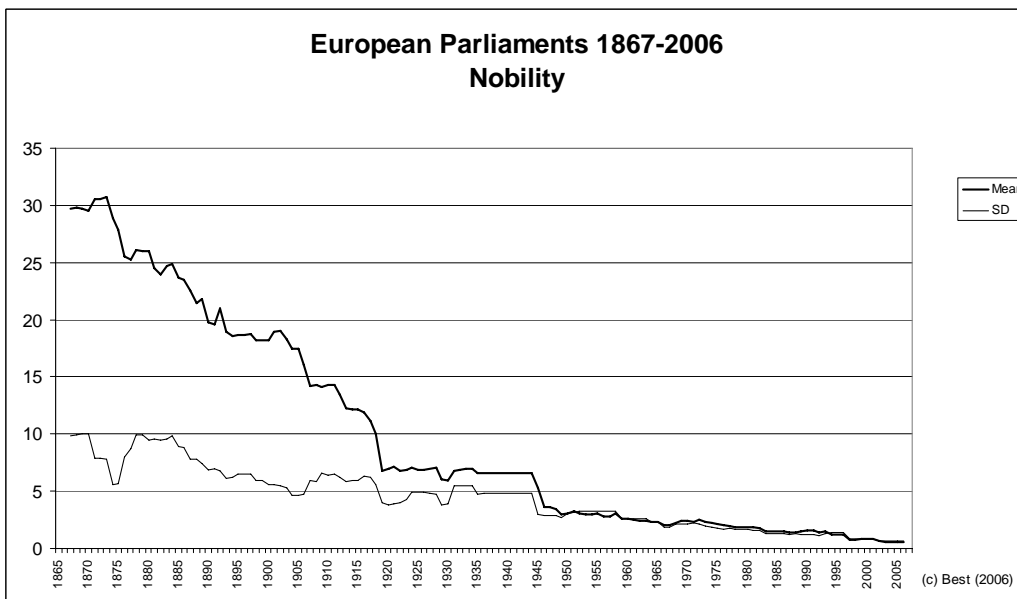
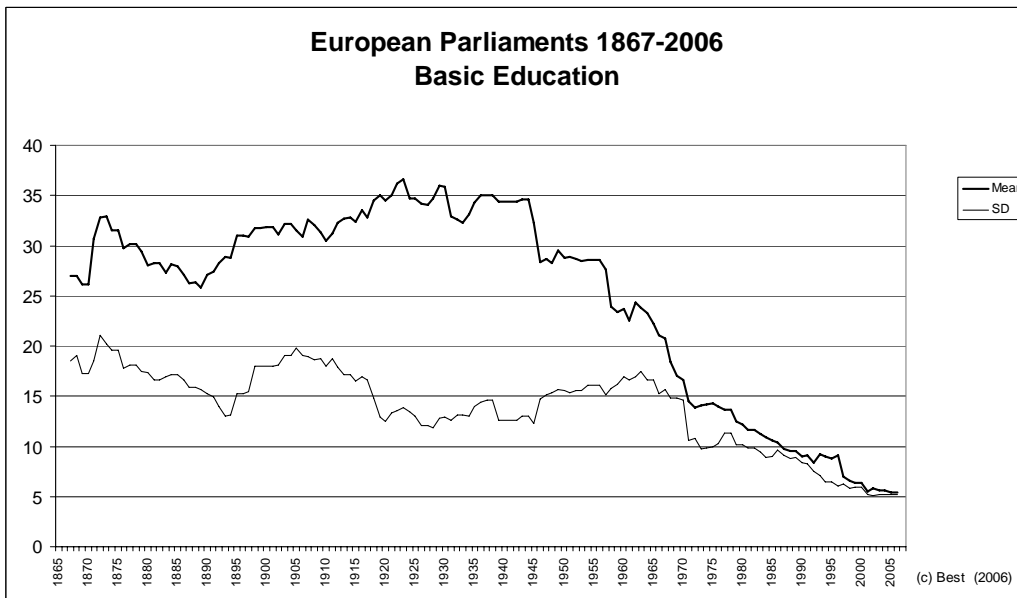
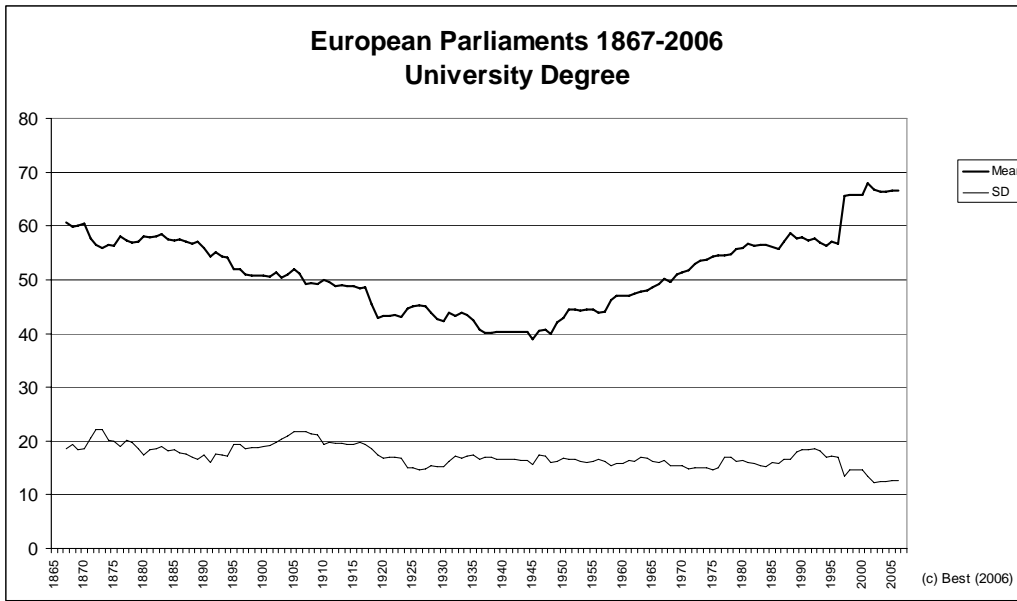
Graph 1: EurElite temporal and regional coverage of national parliaments (as of 12/2005)

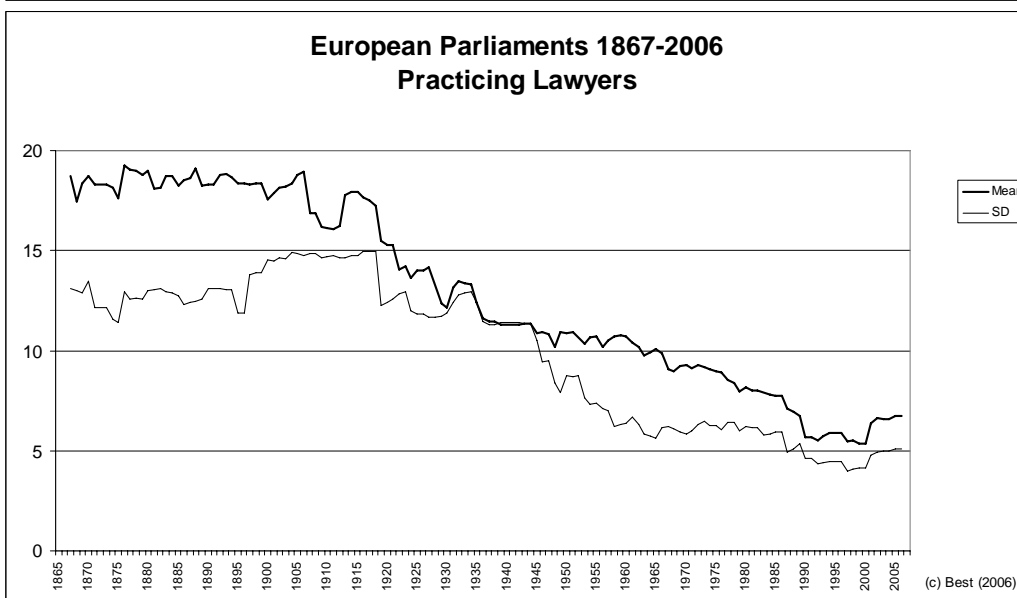
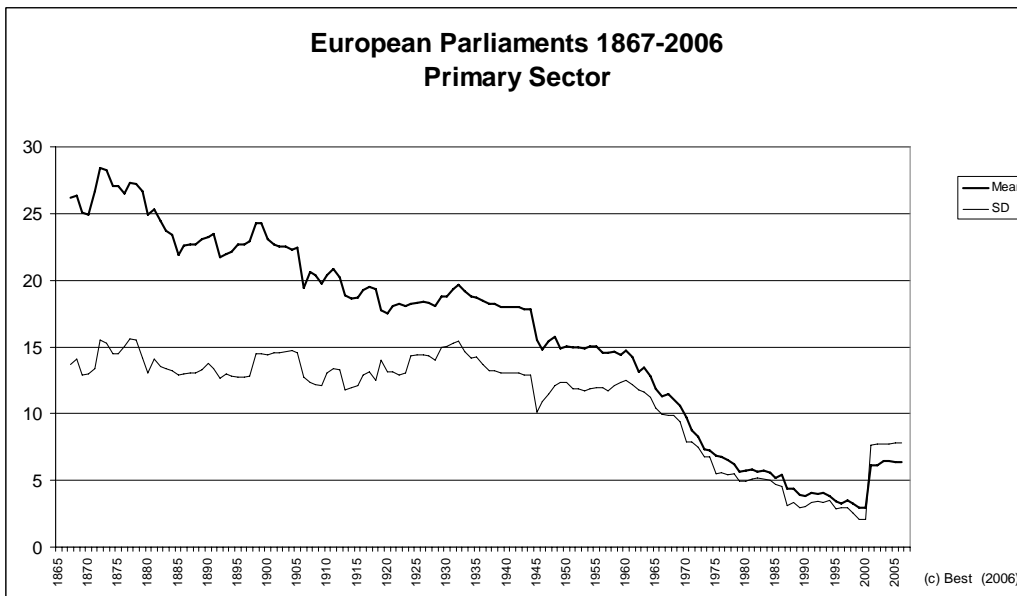
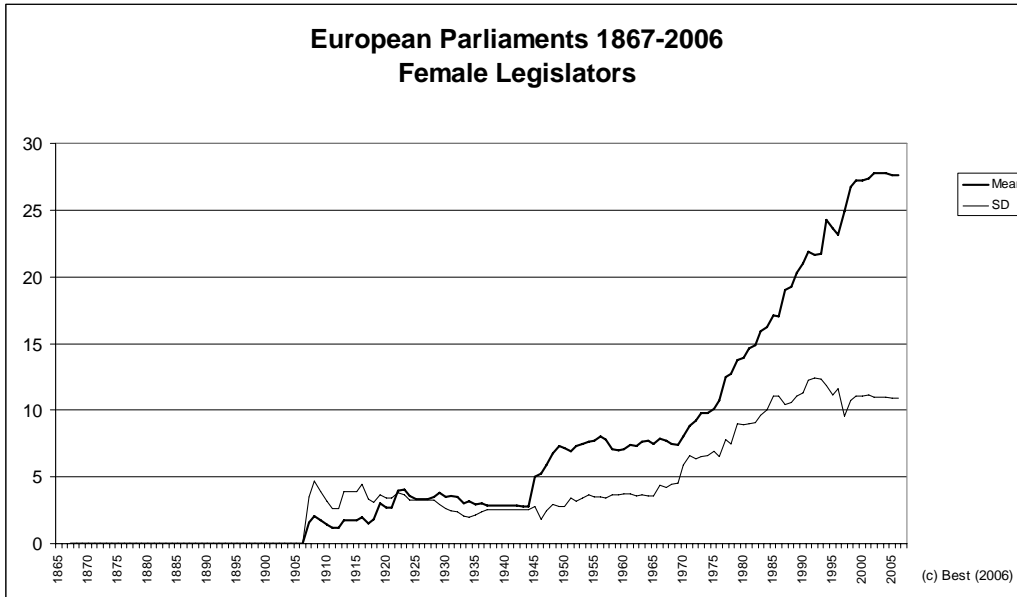


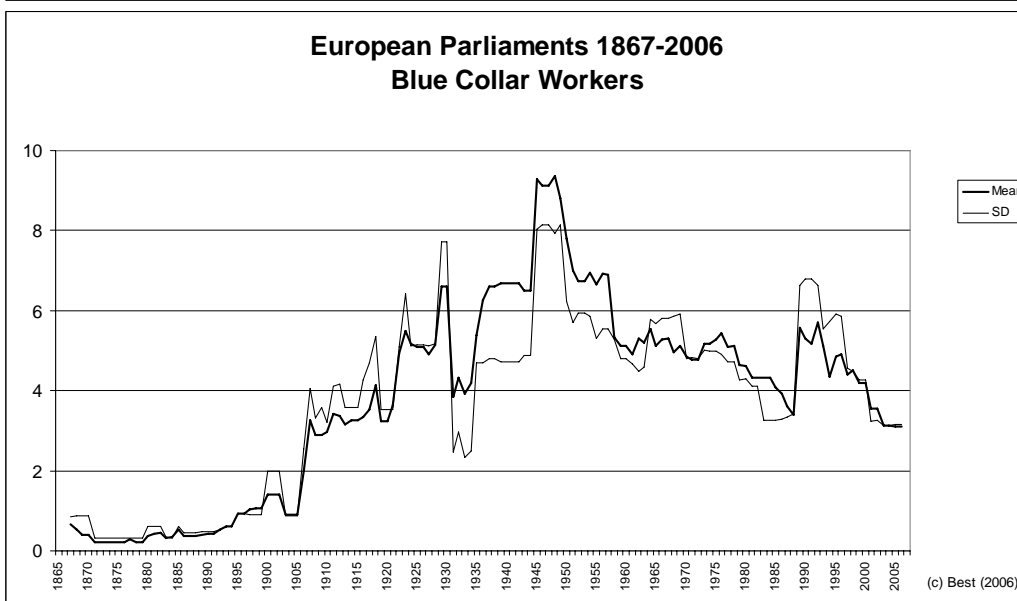
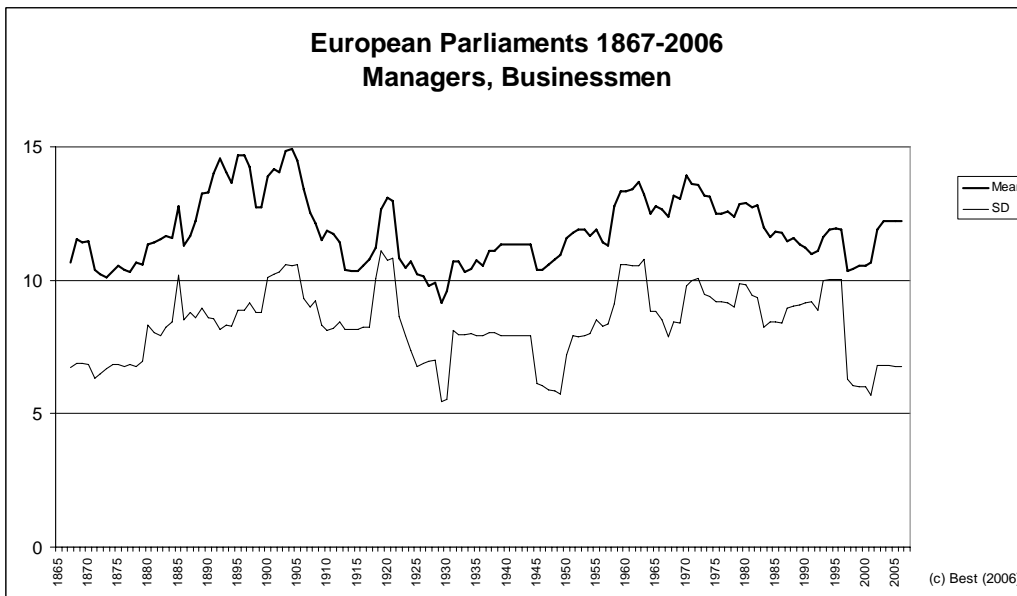
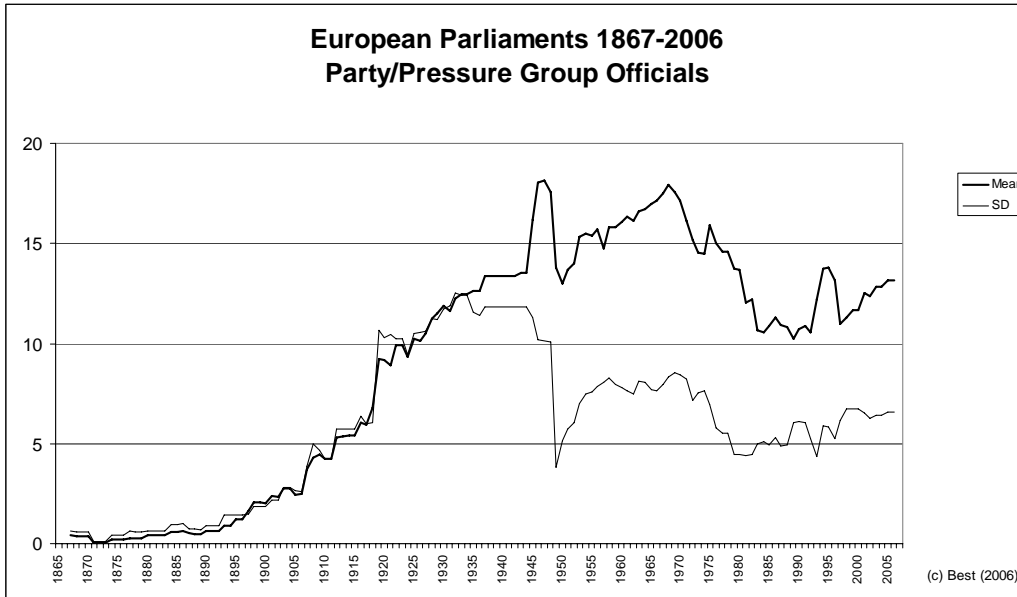
* Countries included in the present study

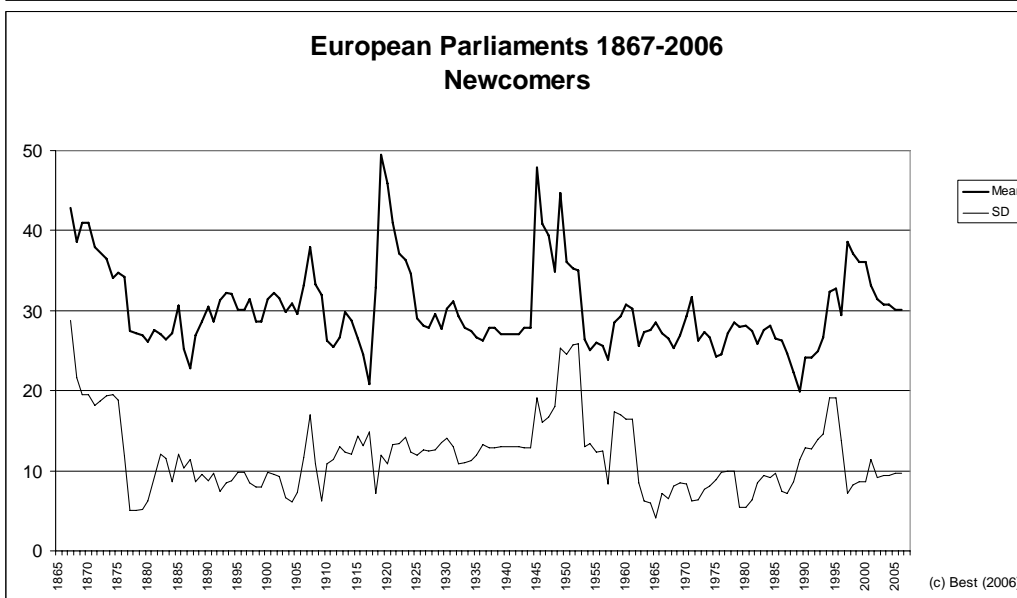
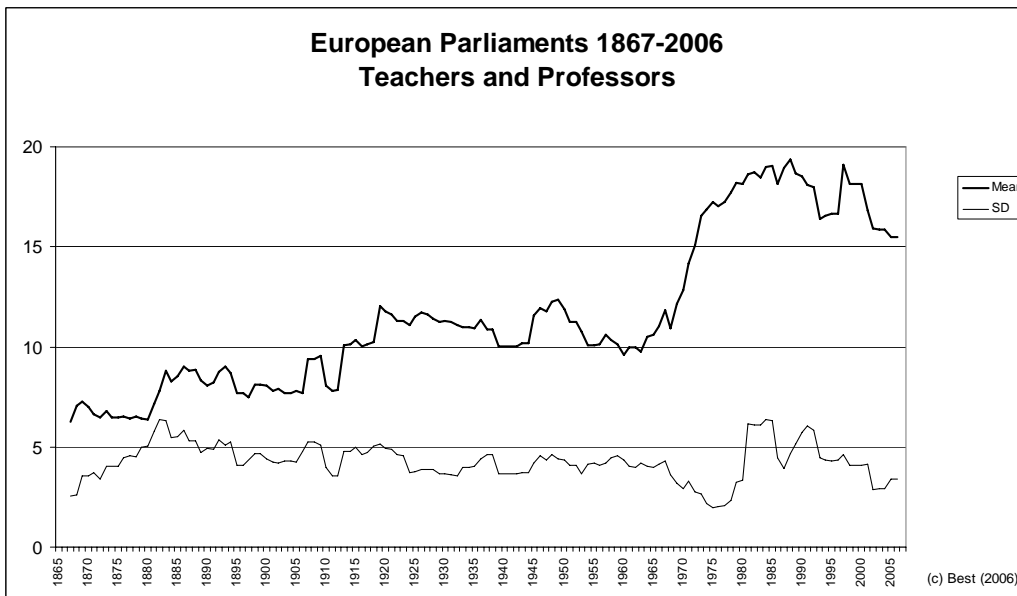
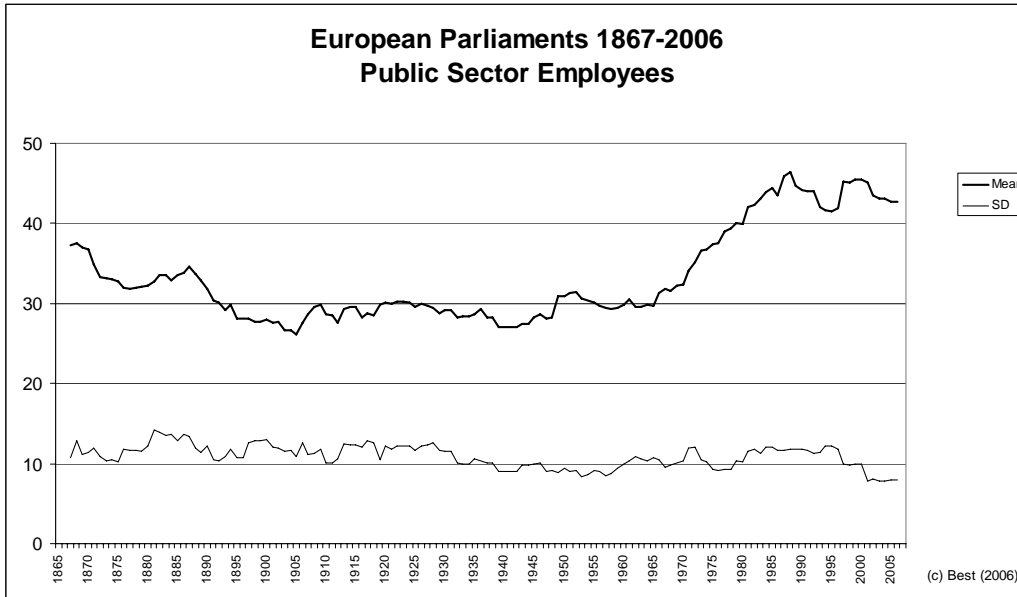
Graph 2: Assets for Legislative Recruitment and Careers

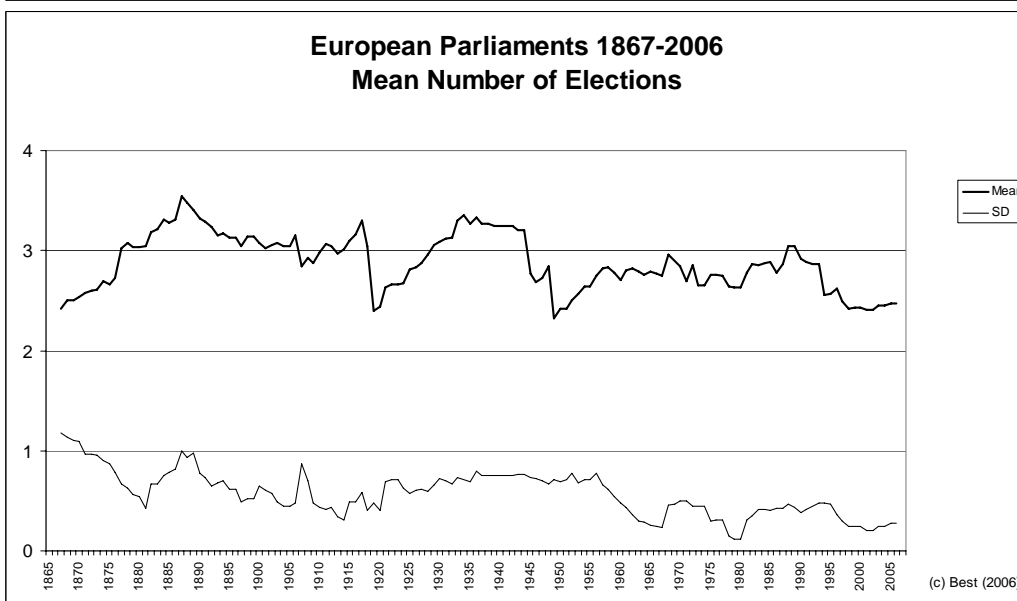
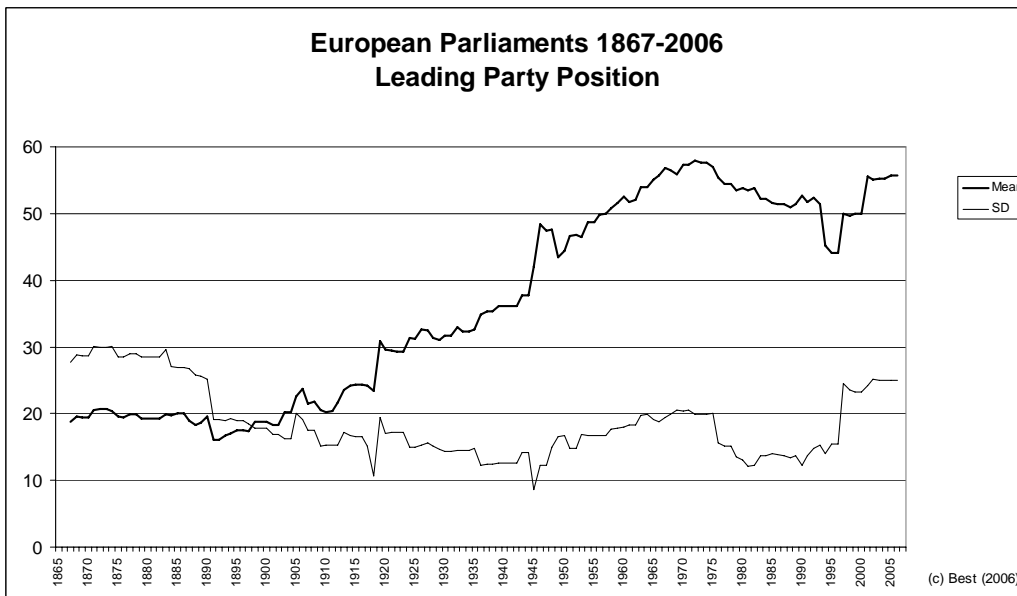
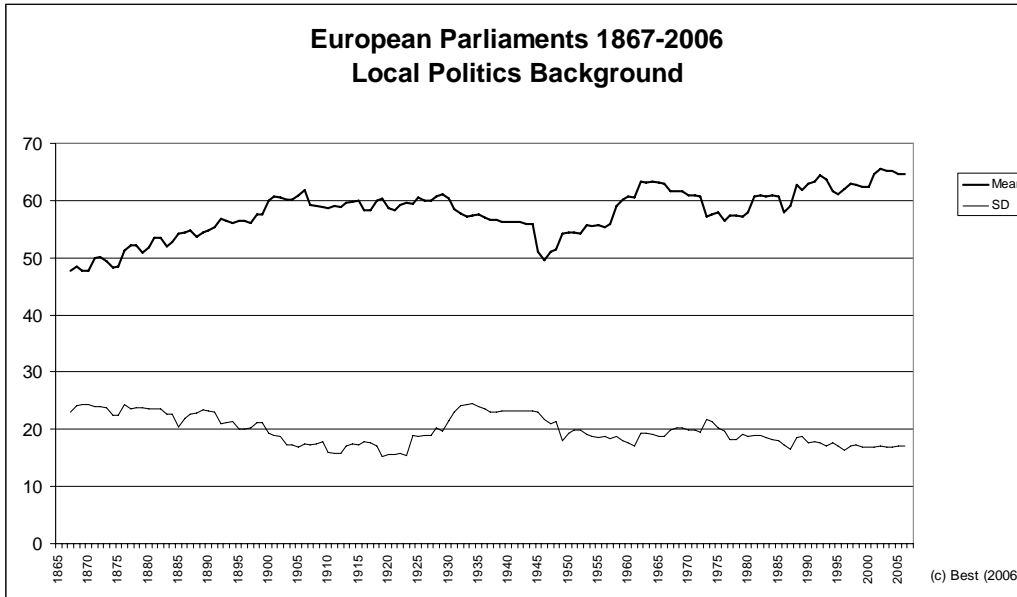
		<i>Focus</i>	
		<i>External</i>	<i>Internal</i>
<i>Origin</i>	<i>Acquired</i>	deferential	instrumental
	<i>Attributed</i>	symbolic	relational

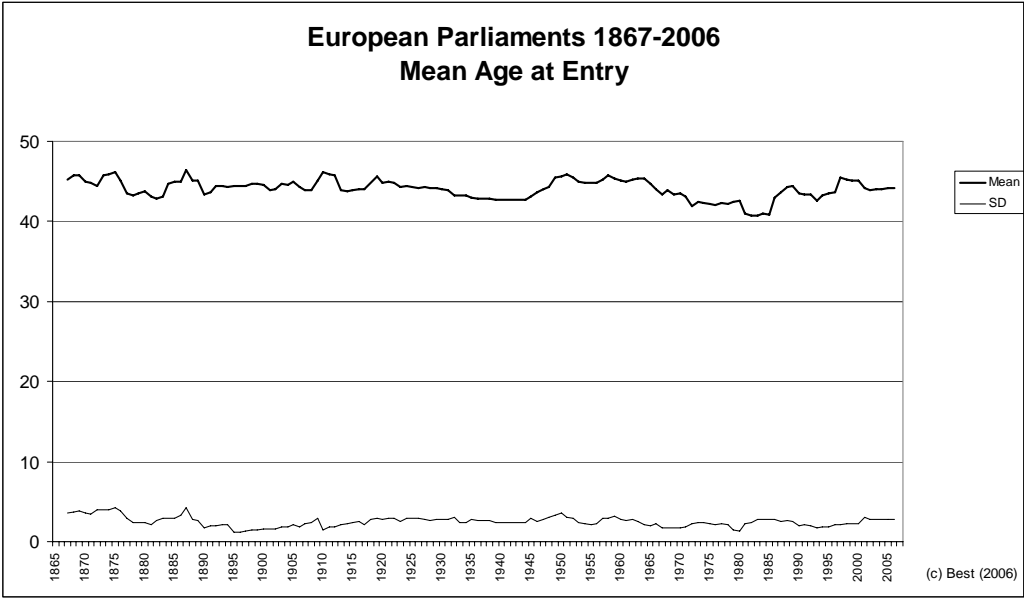




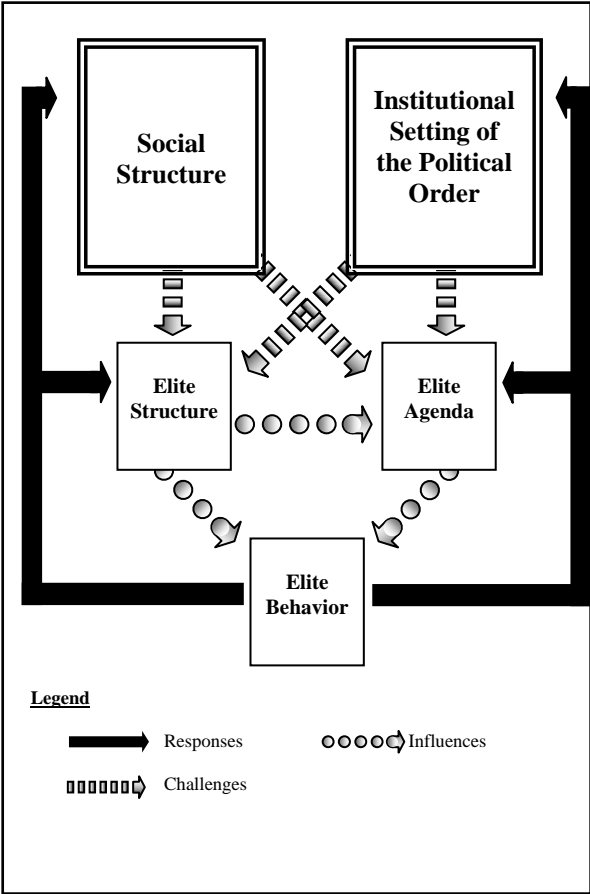








Graph 3: A Challenge Response Model of Political Elite Change



End note:

1 It should be mentioned here that the key concepts of our long term study into European Parliamentary recruitment and careers can be easily translated into the theoretical frameworks of methodological individualism: professionalisation can be thus conceptualized as a process being driven by the self-interests of established representative elites who wish to erect and safeguard a dividing line between themselves and “unprofessional” competitors who are eager to access the inner realm of power and privilege. The professionalisation of pretenders for office can be seen as a means to streamline and to legitimize future newcomers in a process of “reproductive circulation”. On the other hand “democratisation” can be used as a banner of counter-elites under which they rally for their strife for power the support of those who are excluded from the constituency. It is a strong legitimising and mobilising cause which helps those who lead it to move into the centre of power and privilege of a polity.